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## **GOVERNOR HALEY BARBOUR ENCOURAGES PUBLIC COMMENT ON INFRASTRUCTURE ACTION PLAN**

(Jackson, Mississippi)—Governor Haley Barbour is encouraging the public to participate in development of a plan to improve water and sewer services in Mississippi's six southernmost counties.

Governor Barbour today announced that a draft action plan is being published for public comment. It is called the Gulf Coast Regional Infrastructure Program Action Plan and is required by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The plan details how the state will administer about half a billion dollars in federal grants for building new water and sewer infrastructure in the Gulf Region after Hurricane Katrina.

"Water and sewer systems in the Gulf Coast region were decimated by Hurricane Katrina, causing tens of thousands of our citizens to be without these basic services. These systems must be repaired, improved and storm-proofed to ensure future hurricanes do not have the same devastating impacts," Governor Barbour said. "We must also provide infrastructure for new development which will occur as

people move further inland. The federal government has been generous in granting substantial funds to allow for this, and we are working with local governments to provide systems to meet their needs.”

The Gulf Coast Regional Infrastructure Program is designed to address the importance of providing reliable water, sewer and storm water infrastructure and the long-term impact this will have on the recovery of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Specifically, the program details the state’s plans for developing a master plan for water, sewer and storm water systems throughout the lower six counties and explains to HUD how funding for infrastructure development will be administered by the state.

On Tuesday, June 20, 2006, the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) will post the plan for administering the Gulf Coast Regional Infrastructure Program on [www.mississippi.org](http://www.mississippi.org) to allow for public comments and suggestions. All comments must be submitted online by June 29, 2006, to be considered. During the comment period, MDA will compile and evaluate the submissions, make any necessary adjustments to the action plan and submit it to HUD for final approval.

The Gulf Coast Regional Infrastructure Program Action Plan stems from the Legislature’s enactment, during the 2006 legislative session, of the Gulf Region Water Utility Authority Act—a key recommendation of the Governor Barbour’s Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal—which provides for regionalized water, sewer, and storm water systems throughout George, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Pearl River and Stone counties.

The regionalized systems will utilize federal grant funds in the most efficient and effective means possible to implement the recommendations of the master plan being developed by the Department of Environmental Quality. The Gulf Coast Regional Infrastructure Program Action Plan will detail this information to HUD and, once approved, allow for the release of federal funds to Mississippi.

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